DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 283 655 RC 016 293

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TITLE Bilingual Education at Dzil Na'oodilii Community School.
PUB DATE 27 Apr 85
NOTE 12p.; A report on the Navajo Bilingual Education Conference (Red Rock State Park, NM, April 26-27, 1985).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *American Indian Education; Biculturalism; *Bilingual Education; Bilingual Teachers; Change Strategies; Community Attitudes; Community Control; *Cultural Education; Educational Change; *Educational Policy; *Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; Inservice Teacher Education; Navajo; Policy Formation; Program Descriptions; *Program Development; Tribal Sovereignty; Tribes
IDENTIFIERS Dzilth Na O Dith Hle Community School NM; *Navajo (Nation)

ABSTRACT

Proceedings of a Navajo Bilingual Education Conference held April 26 and 27, 1985, are summarized in this report which focuses on the implementation of Navajo language and cultural education at the Dzlith Na O Dith Hle Community School (DCS). The paper begins by stating that the conference was intended to assist educators in understanding and preparing a plan to comply with new educational policies established by the Navajo Tribal Council on November 14, 1984, mandating excellence in education for all Navajos and specifying instruction in Navajo language and culture. A section on educational policies summarizes the positions of the Navajo Tribe, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the State of New Mexico, Eastern Navajo Agency, and DCS. Recommendations for DCS include formation of a committee of teachers, administrators, school board members, and parents who will investigate options for implementing a bilingual education program. The report lays out options and costs for implementing Navajo language instruction and cultural education with and without the services of an outside curriculum consultant. The final section, titled "A Global Perspective of Bilingual Education," summarizes experiences of other peoples who speak a different language at home than at school and points out benefits of bilingualism. (JHZ)

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BILINGUAL EDUCATION
at
Dzil Na'oodilii Community School

a report on the Navajo Bilingual Education Conference at Red Rock State Park , April 26 and 27, 1985
and
a recommendation for implementation

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The Navajo Tribal Council established an educational law on November 14, 1984. The new mandate represents a committment to excellence in education for all its people:

"We believe that excellence can best be achieved in an environment where people work together, sharing resources and expertise across the various school systems operation in the Navajo Nation. We believe that an excellent education can produce achievement in the basic academic skills and skills required by modern technology and still educate young Navajo citizens in their language, history, government and culture.1

The Navajo Nation's Division of Education (NDOE) and other interested agencies sponsored the Navajo Bilingual Education Conference. This was held on April 26 and 27, 1985 to assist educators in understanding and preparing a plan to comply with the new policies. This paper reports some of the ideas of the conference and some options that Dzilth Na o dith hle Community School (DCS) may have.

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Tribal Policies

The portion of the policy that affects our school can be summarized into two categories, language and culture:

NAVAJO LANGUAGE

Navajo language instruction shall be made available for all grade levels in all schools serving the Navajo Nation including instruction in: thinking, speaking, comprehension, reading and writing and grammar.

EDUCATION IN NAVAJO CULTURE AND SOCIAL STUDIES

The Navajo people and those who reside with the Navajo people should retain and/or develop an understanding, knowledge and respect for Navajo culture, history, civics and social studies. 2

This type of bilingual education approach is called "additive". Students become fluent and literate equally in two languages. This is different from "ESL" with English-only instruction or "transitional bilingual". Both of these are designed to phase out the mother tongue.[3]

The tribe is gaining in power to carry out policies of such significance. In the past few days the tribe has received authority by Supreme Court decision to tax; signed an agreement with Utah International to receive $40,000 per day in taxes; the governors of the three states have signed out of state tuition waivers so Navajo students can attend college in New Mexico, Utah or Arizona; begun the process to insure that excellent students can receive tribal scholarships for college, not just those from poor families. Although two years ago, only 1000 Navajo were in college, by fall 1985, there will be over 4000.4

We want to make the children productive, keep the community together, teach Navajo language, culture and lifestyle. We want the parents to visit the school daily. We want to give the children the opportunity to understand the world about them and understand their culture and heritage. We want them to have meaningful, stimulating, adequate education.5

BIA Policies

The mission of the Bureau includes maintenance of language and culture if desired locally. The .20 add on ($400 each) is specifically for English language deficient students to participate in intense bilingual instruction. The BIA does not intend to recommend any type of standardized curriculum. Most schools have been using the add on for ESL programs in the past. Extra money is not available for the costs of a new program. The BIA does not intend to recommend a standard curriculum for all the schools.6

New Mexico State Policies

The New Mexico State standard for bilingual education says that the educational needs of the school should be assessed and bilingual education carried out.5 To assist in carrying this out, the New Mexico Department of Education provides state funds for each student who speaks other than English at home.7

Eastern Navajo Agency Policies

The agency has asked each school to discuss the mandate of the tribe and begin developing a plan for compliance.

Dzilth Na O Dith Hle Policies

The school has had no policy similar to the one now required. Previous suggestions to begin bilingual instruction have been rejected. It has been assumed to be an enrichment activity that might take time away from the teaching of English. The administration is sensitive to the possible controversy involved. It is not likely they will push the issue. If the impetus comes from the local community, the administration and staff will wholly support it.

Most staff members agree that the program should be conducted with willing volunteers, not as a mandate for all the classes. Teachers and aides who show an interest by taking courses in Navajo literacy and bilingual methods should be the key personnel on the committee that plans implementation, and that in harmony with the Agency plan. Many teachers believe that a pilot group should be started in Kindergarten or First Grade. That group could continue through each grade with the literacy program. This would give the school enough time to adjust and the staff time to

prepare. The budget would also be easier to manage. English only teachers will always have a place on the staff: the definition of "bilingual" in this model is "fluent and literate in both languages".

Now a new era begins. We are in the business of reinforcing the home values and preparing the students to be succesful in the world today. This new policy will allow us to do so in an exciting and stimulating way. Navajo oral tradition predicted that the Dine would cease to be a people soon after losing their language. We are fortunate to be called to participate in the renewal and revival of a nationality.

A dialogue should soon begin among staff, parents and the school board. A long range goal for compliance should be set. A step by step plan should be established which should include ways of involving the parents and the community in the ultimate implementation. No action should be taken until the school board gives a vote in favor of long term support. Leadership for implementation should come from the school board and from the community.

DCS BILINGUAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Interested teachers and administrators should immediately organize a format for discussion.

2. Interested school board members and parents should join with the committee to learn of options and discuss a strategy for implementing the tribal and agency mandate.

3. The committee should seek leadership and direction from the Agency, or provide it to them. This paper mentions a number of individuals and agencies that are prepared to help.

A RATIONALE

<u>Why we should have additive bilingual education</u>

At the conference, Dr. Melendez mentioned six reasons why we should have bilingual education in this form.8

1. We want to. The representative body of our people has so declared.
2. We have a right to. Federal, state and tribal political policy and funding practice supports it.
3. Self identity. A people that loses their language, loses their culture and their identity.
4. Self worth.
   Competency in two languages increases self esteem.

Values and traditions are seen as worthwhile.

5. Literacy.

It is easier to learn to read in the first language. One only needs to learn to read once.

Children literate in their own language first, learn a second better.

For each year studying a new language, the scores in English go up. Learning Navajo grammar improves understanding of English grammar.

6. Frame of Reference.

A dual frame of reference gives advantage in understanding the world.

Increases tolerance of other peoples and cultures.

Navajo history is best understood in the Navajo language.

Mr. Pascual testified from personal experience and reported the results of worldwide studies when he stated that bilingual education works. "The best language for initial school instruction is the home language." Abstract concepts are best understood in the home language.9

At the conference, a young boy was heard to ask someone during a particularly long speech in Navajo; "do you understand Navajo? I don't. I used to when I was a baby, but I don't anymore". When asked about it, he said he would like to learn.

The Bloomfield School District program teaches many Anglo and Hispanic teachers in Navajo bilingual methods. Some have been studying these for 6 years and are anxious to start a seventh. Each year, more teachers enthusiastically start the Navajo classes and feel they are become better prepared as teachers because of the training. They feel that awareness of cultural and linguistic traits of the Navajo gives them more empathy with the students' feelings and problems in patterns of language interference. The Navajo concepts are taught in direct support of specific district instructional objectives. Benefits have included increased student oral involvement and higher CTBS scores.10

<u>How to implement an additive bilingual program at DCS</u>

A BIA principal was asked, what do you and your staff think of the new requirement? He responded, "it doesn't matter what we think, it is a requirement". Ms. Blanchard of the Navajo Division of Education (NDOE) agreed: "we don't need to worry about IF it is possible, just HOW to do it.

Mr. Tsosie of the Tribal Council quoted a Chinese proverb: "Do not wait to dig the well until the house is on fire." We have talked about it for 10-15 years, now the political climate is right to move on it. We need to

develop one Navajo bilingual curriculum for all of the reservation. We need to do it before our people have lost their language and culture.11

Mr. Pascual (NM Dept. of Education), agreed with the others. There should be a standard curriculum. Once the teachers are provided with a curriculum, they can teach it page by page and learn along with the students. They will be proficient by the end of the first year of the program. No great expense in training staff is needed with this method.

Universities and colleges in Arizona and New Mexico offer courses each summer to prepare teachers in bilingual strategies and Navajo literacy. The Navajo Academy in Farmington plans to offer a useful course this summer. They will use a new text by Dr. Paul Platero that is designed to teach Navajo language literacy to adult (and high school) Navajo speakers. They plan to fund all expenses with Title IV funds and provide participants with a stipend.12

The schools currently using additive bilingual strategies advocate <u>daily</u> culture and language studies in the Navajo language. (Borrego Pass, Rough Rock, Navajo Academy, Rock Point, etc.)

The NDOE was established as a means of survival for the Dine. All schools serving the Navajo are to teach Navajo and meet the needs of the Navajo People. The Bilingual Office of the NDOE will make available resource lists and establish a resource center. They will develop an instrument to measure language proficiency. They will develop a resource network. They will assist in community indoctrination.13

All these entities will help us. All we have to do is form a committee, communicate our needs and interests with them and ask for help as appropriate.

<u>Options for Procedures and Costs (in house)</u>

LANGUAGE	cost
1. Teacher attends Navajo Academy (or other literacy program)	$no
2. Teacher trains Aides and Navajo teachers during the school year 1985-86 (20 books)	$150
3. Navajo Academy sends advisor periodically	$no
Total cost for training	

the Navajo staff
with this option:
(textbooks only) $150

4. Student materials

a. should be standard agency-wide
b. should be K-8 text + reading materials and workbooks
c. Options

1. Borrego Pass[14] - texts for each grade level K-8 plus workbook (2 books) $2670

2. NAMDC[15] - texts for each grade level K-6 plus workbooks and teacher's guides. $1141. Additional supplementary readers, aides and dictionaries available.

Total cost for student materials to equip the entire school: $1141 or 2670 to teach Navajo literacy.

CULTURE

1. Hire or recruit a grandpa or an off duty bus driver (like they do at Bloomfield) to tell stories and sing songs to each class who comes in the library. Perhaps the Grandparents program now in effect could be adapted to this approach. Total cost: from none to $salary.

2. Hire a Navajo resource teacher to follow a curriculum and teach recommended concepts. Total cost: salary + materials.

a. San Juan District Media Center[16] Cultural Awareness Teacher's Guides K-6, (7 manuals) $51.10 A large variety of additional materials are available in English and/or Navajo: books, tapes, filmstrips, cards, posters, etc.

b. Rough Rock[17] Bilingual and Navajo Social Studies textbooks with student reader, teacher's guide and language arts book. Navajo/Native American based literature and drama, bilingual and cultural readers and reference materials.

<u>Options not in-house</u>

Benefits: outside leadership from experts trained and experienced and motivated to show us the way.

1. Borrego Pass[18]. The Curriculum Coordinator, Bill Kniseley, is qualified and prepared to come help us set up a bilingual education system. Cost: travel and per diem only. Additional cost, materials as listed above ($2670). Advantage: the Agency is familiar with this long running program and could provide us with continuity and leadership.

2. Helen George. Helen is a Navajo professional consultant in bilingual curriculum. She is the director of the NAMDC and can be reached through the address in the bibliography, £15. $Travel, per diem fee plus materials as listed above ($1141). Advantage: Helen is Navajo. Helen is expert.

3. Resource Teacher. Advertise for and hire a qualified person to run the program here. $Salary + materials. Advantage: the program could be watched over and encouraged daily on site. Teachers, aides and community volunteers could be involved in constant training and supervision.

4. Wait and see if the Agency hires someone and sends them to each school. $time. Advantage: we would be sure to be in harmony with what the long range plan of the Agency will be.

PERSPECTIVE

A Global Perspective of Bilingual Education[19]

The Navajo have something in common with the majority of the world: they speak a different language at home than at school. Clay tablets dating beyond 2000 B.C. are shown to be written by Acadian speaking students learning the dominant language, Sumerian. German immigrants were among the first in America to advocate bilingual education. The concept was rejected during the wave of "nationalism" brought on by WWII. The great influx of Cubans and South Americans during the 1950s and '60s resulted in the introduction of bilingual education again.

The indigenous people of New Zealand, the Maori, first had a written language in 1830. By the 1890s, instruction was given in Maori with Maori language textbooks. By 1930, it was possible to gain a BA or an MA in Maori. However, by 1977 only two villages of the entire population of 300,000 Maori were sending Maori speaking children to school at age 5. Almost the entire population of children could not speak Maori.

The parents had suddenly, in one generation quit teaching their language to their children because they were told that they would do better in English if they abandoned

their language. It proved to be false. Now great efforts are being made to restore the language to the children. The children thusly trained in two languages are doing better in the English language than their predecessors. The key is: Know the first language.

Early U.S. studies of achievement by students whose home language was other than English showed that they did not achieve comparably with the national norm. Later studies by researchers like Wallace Lambert and Jane Mercer proved that the difference should not have been blamed on the home language, but the economic and educational status of the family. The early studies compared poor, migrant Chicanos with middle class Anglos. The various studies by Lambert and Mercer compared bilinguals with monolinguals of the same economic status. The result was always: the bilinguals did better.

James Cummins and Merril Swaine conducted a dozen studies worldwide which showed benefits of bilingualism. The studies consistently showed that the students scores were behind the norm until the 5th to 8th grade; then they began to advance quickly ahead of the monolinguals.

Research in the issue of second language learners consistently shows that bilingualism does not hinder learning. In fact, Kids who know their first language well learn the second language well. More importantly, kids who have a stimulating home life and learn their first language well, do well in school. If they need to learn a second language, a solid foundation in the first language makes it easier.

Steve Krashen, an expert in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL), summarized the issue well. Kids learn effectively when the input (I) is I+1. Give them information that is just one step above what they already know. If they already know it, they will go to sleep in your presentation. If it is too far above their heads, they will also go to sleep. That is what can happen if you teach a new concept with new vocabulary in a new language.

A final plea was given by the president of the Navajo Community College. His generation was taught in school that they must abandon their language and culture in order to survive in the dominant culture. His generation is marked by a high percentage of unemployment, alcoholism and suicide. That form of education resulted in feelings of inferiority that last throughout life. He advocates a solution that will help his people to not only survive, but compete and enjoy a happy, well adjusted life: bilingual education.20

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